# Pacific Islands Fishery News

Newsletter of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

Spring 2005


## Council Co-sponsors Workshop for Pacific Island Countries

The Workshop on Fisheries Legislation and Community-Based Fisheries Management, held in Honolulu, April 4 to 9, 2005, brought together 64 fishery scientists and resource managers from more than two dozen Pacific Island countries. Co-sponsored by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the workshop culminated with the development of four recommendations:

- Training on the use of the SPC socioeconomic manual should be conducted at the earliest opportunity,
- Training to enable countries to develop their own fisheries management plans should be conducted as soon as possible,
- A regional approach should be taken to resolve problems faced by countries in the management of their live food fish industries, and
- Workshops to resolve difficulties encountered in the development of community-based fisheries management should be held on a sub-regional basis because of differences in cultures, customs and traditions within the region.

Development of sustainable coastal fisheries through community-based management was recognized as the overarching goal for all of the countries and the most cost-effective and enforceable approach for developing countries. With the community enforcing regulations, the cost of enforcement is reduced, but fairness and equity, as well as traditional tenure and social obligations, may pose problems.

Blaise Kuemlangan of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (right) leads a workshop exercise on fisheries legislation.

Coastal fisheries management must also take into account the cultural systems that are in place. For example, in discussing fishing violations in Samoa, the penalties seemed unfair considering how little the offenders owned until it was stated that, although the individual was penalized, the *matai* (chief) of the village was responsible for payment of the fine and the entire village contributed to the payment. The resulting peer pressure helped to prevent a repeat offense.

The varied experiences of the fisheries managers indicated that there is not a single formula for a successful community-based management plan, and developing such plans can be a long and sometimes difficult process. One of the leftovers of colonization in many small Pacific countries is the culture of dependence. As empowering as the process of community-based management can be, the workshop participants recognized that for many countries some kind of de-colonization training may be needed.

The week-long workshop for Pacific island fishery managers included field trips to the Honolulu fish auction (pictured) and Heeia Kea fishpond.

A fisherman and his son release a loggerhead turtle in Baja California (photo courtesy of Hoyt Peckham)

## Sea Turtle Conservation Projects Lauded

The Turtle Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council met March 3, 2005, to review the progress of the Council's sea turtle conservation program. All projects implemented in 2004 met their goals to protect nesting beaches and reduce sea turtle mortalities resulting from direct harvest or fishery bycatch.

The TAC stressed the importance of conservation and management activities that maximize beach productivity and hatchling production and provided valuable recommendations on methods to strengthen these actions.

The TAC congratulated the Kamiali community of Papua New Guinea for its dedication to conserve leatherback sea turtles through their harvest moratorium and beach monitoring efforts.

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Fishery scientists and resource managers from more than two dozen Pacific islands participated in the UN FAO, SPC and Council co-sponsored coastal fishery management workshop.

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Results from War-mon beach, Indonesia, challenged prior hypotheses regarding the population dynamics of the Papuan leatherback. They revealed that this nesting beach is far more important than previously thought (2,881 nests laid compared to 1,000 expected).

The Council's projects in Japan to protect loggerhead turtles achieved not only their conservation objectives (157,000 hatchlings released), but maximized hatchling production through the successful relocation of nests that were laid in erosion prone areas.

The TAC also provided recommendations to better define the objectives and quantify the successes of sea turtle conservation projects operating in foraging grounds. For example, although anecdotal information from Baja California suggests that turtle consumption has decreased and coastal gillnet fishers have reduced interactions with the species, the number of turtles conserved by these Council-sponsored actions is difficult to quantify.

The TAC was supportive of the progress of the program and recommended that all projects continue, with nesting beach projects expanded if possible.

## Loggerhead Sea Turtle Workshop

Twenty-one researchers from Japan, Baja California, Mexico and Hawaii attended the North Pacific Loggerhead Sea Turtle workshop March 2-4, 2005, in Honolulu. Convened by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management, the workshop also involved the Council's Turtle Advisory Committee, which provided valuable advice, encouragement and recommendations to the researchers.

Participants from Japan (the Sea Turtle Association of Japan, Yakushima Island, and Miyazaki Wildlife Research Group), Baja California and Mexico (Blue Ocean Institute and Pro Caguama) reviewed the results from their first Council-supported field season (summer 2004) and developed objectives for future research and conservation activities. Scientists from the Pacific Islands Fishery Science Center presented a summary of collaborative pelagic research with Japan and Taiwan, results from oceanographic and satellite telemetry data of juvenile loggerhead turtle habitats in the Kuroshio Extension Current, results from loggerhead turtle fishery mitigation experiments, and data from turtle bycatch studies in Peru. Wildlife Trust's director for conservation medicine provided valuable information regarding health studies of sea turtles with an emphasis on Baja California turtles.

Loggerhead Workshop participants

## Council Hosts Sea Turtle Bycatch Reduction Workshop

Forty-three persons representing a dozen countries, several international and regional organizations and many local interests attended the first *Technical Assistance Workshop on Sea Turtle Bycatch Reduction Experiments in Longline Fisheries,* April 11-14, in Honolulu. The workshop was held to provide FAO participants with technical assistance on designing programs to develop and test turtle-bycatch reducing technology appropriate to longline fishing in their countries.

Five national delegations (Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico and the Philippine Islands) participated in the workshop. Non-governmental organizations and researchers from many of these countries as well as Italy, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Spain, Solomon Islands, United States and Vietnam also participated.

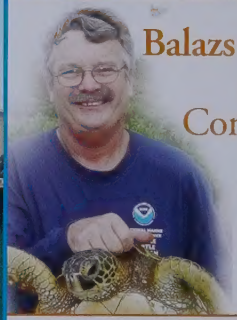
Christofer Boggs shows how to de-hook a "turtle"

The workshop reviewed research on turtle bycatch reduction in longline fisheries being conducted around the world. The primary finding has been that replacing J hooks and Japanese-style tuna hooks with circle hooks reduces the severity of injury to captured turtles and that using larger sized (i.e., wider than about 4.9 cm) circle hooks and using fish instead of squid for bait can substantially reduce sea turtle bycatch.

Workshop participants (l-r) Martin Hall of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, Christofer Boggs of the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center and John Watson of the Southeast Fisheries Science Center examine hooks.

Hosted by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and sponsored by National Marine Fisheries Service's Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, the workshop was a follow-up to the FAO Technical Consultation on Sea Turtle Conservation and Fisheries, held Nov. 29-Dec. 2, 2004, in Bangkok, Thailand. Related discussions will also take place at the Third International Fishers Forum (IFF3) scheduled to be held July 25-29, 2005, in Yokohama, Japan.

## Balazs Honored for Turtle Conservation Work



The National Wildlife Federation honored George Balazs with its National Conservation Achievement Award for exemplary leadership in protecting wildlife and natural resources. Balazs received the special achievement award at the organization's annual meeting in the nation's capital on March 31.

As a NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service Protected Species biologist, Balazs has devoted 34 years to recovery of the Hawaiian green sea turtle. He played a major role in the listing of the green sea turtle as an endangered species in 1978 and has led efforts to educate people about the Hawaiian green sea turtle and uncover new information about its biology.

# Council Addresses Overfishing of Bigeye Tuna

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council at its 126th meeting, March 14-17, 2005, in Honolulu, unanimously voted to develop a suite of domestic and international initiatives to address overfishing of bigeye tuna in the Pacific Ocean. The Council's plan may require some or all Hawaii boats fishing in federally managed waters (3-200 miles offshore) to be federally permitted and to submit federal logbooks. The Council would also engage the efforts of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), the Pelagic Fisheries Research Program and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers to ensure effective and equitable regional management of this highly migratory species.

The Council made several recommendations regarding US representation on the WCPFC, the Interim Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific (ISC) and the IATTC. The Council concluded that domestic fishing regulations resulting from international treaties should be implemented through the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and its associated Regional Fishery Management Council public process.

NMFS recognized that overfishing of the species was occurring in its annual report to Congress in June 2004. The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires Councils to take action to address overfishing of a stock. In December 2004, NMFS notified the Council that it and the Pacific Fishery Management Council had to take action to address overfishing of the species by June 14, 2005.

At the same time, the IATTC required large-scale tuna longline vessels of various nations fishing in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) to limit their 2004, 2005 and 2006 catch levels to their 2001 level.

The Council recognizes that any unilateral action it takes will not stop the overfishing of bigeye tuna in the Pacific. The fisheries under the Council's jurisdiction account for less than 5 percent of the bigeye tuna caught in the Pacific.

Bigeye depletion is likely linked to overfishing in part through increased catches of juveniles by purse seine vessels. These vessels, which mainly provide tuna for canneries, increasingly deploy and fish around floating objects that aggregate bigeye juveniles as well as the targeted skipjack and yellowfin tunas. US purse seine vessels are currently managed by NMFS (with access agreements negotiated by the US Department of State) and not through the Council process.

Harvesting too many juvenile bigeye is not biologically sound since it leads to a reduction in the recruitment to the adult spawning stock. These mature adults are fished by longline vessels for the valuable fresh fish and *sashimi* markets. Further, juvenile bigeye tuna is not as desirable as skipjack for canning.

Fortunately, bigeye in the Western and Central Pacific has been experiencing high levels of recruitment. However, if this declines, the stock could become overfished.

The challenge for the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council is balancing the needs for tuna conservation with the potential for expansion of longline fishing in the Western Pacific, especially in Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands, where there is currently little domestic longline fishing.

# Fishing Regulations Drafted for Proposed NWHI Sanctuary

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council in March took final action on draft fishing regulations for the proposed Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) National Marine Sanctuary (NMS). The regulations would place a moratorium on all potential crustacean, precious coral and coral reef commercial, recreational, subsistence and sustenance fisheries in the NWHI until the implementation of a science-based, fishery ecosystem management plan developed by the Council in consultation with the NMS Program and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The regulations would allow ongoing bottomfish and pelagic troll and handline fisheries to continue under existing federal regulations with some modifications. Native Hawaiian use would be allowed by local communities eligible under a Western Pacific Community Development Program. NWHI fisheries would continue to be managed by NMFS and the Council under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

The Council transmitted its recommendation and supporting documentation to the NMS Program in early April. Under the NMS Act, Regional Fishery Management Councils have the opportunity to draft fishing regulations for sanctuaries that are being designated. The Secretary of Commerce determines whether the draft regulations are consistent with the purposes and policies of the NMS Act and the goals and objectives of the proposed sanctuary. The overarching goal of the proposed NWHI Sanctuary is the long-lasting protection of the coral reef ecosystem.

Under existing federal regulations up to 17 bottomfish vessels, with a maximum size of 60 feet length, are permitted to fish in the NWHI. Nine bottomfish vessels are currently active. They provide about one-third of Hawaii's commercial landings of bottomfish from healthy stocks fished well below biologically safe levels of harvest. Scientists have determined that the bottomfish fishery has virtually no impact on the ecosystem or protected species of the NWHI.

In addition, recent research by the National Marine Fisheries Service's Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center shows that it is unlikely the NWHI is a nursery for the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI). The dominant ocean currents run from the MHI to the NWHI and not vice versa.

The NWHI span 1,200 miles, or about the length of the entire East or West Coast of the United States. The proposed NWHI Sanctuary would be a 100-mile band covering the entire NWHI chain, an area of about 132,000 square miles or seven times the area of the 13 existing National Marine Sanctuaries combined.

The Council's recommendation can be downloaded from the Council's website at www.wpcouncil.org.

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# Native Hawaiian Fishpond Project Exceeds CDPP Goals

Loko Ia O Heeia students recite a Hawaiian chant during the 126th Council meeting.

Paepae O Heeia, one of the first projects to receive funding from the Western Pacific Community Demonstration Project Program (CDPP), has exceeded its goals. At the March 2005 meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, Mahina Paishon, executive director of the organization, provided an update on the project to re-establish and manage Loko Ia O Heeia—a long neglected, 88-acre, traditional Hawaiian fishpond on the island of Oahu.

The CDPP funding was used to develop three educational programs, which now serve 3,000 students annually.

The first program created 3/4-acre pens in the pond. Three public charter schools focusing on Hawaiian culture and language adopted the pens to educate 7th to 12th grade-level students in traditional aquaculture methods. Excess fish were harvested for consumption.

The second program established three additional 1/4-acre pens for one hundred families from five Hawaiian language immersion schools from Waianae, Kaneohe, Honolulu, Kalihi and Hauula. Each school participates weekly, and every student (1st to 12th grade) participates at the site at least once a month.

The third program assists Paepae O Heeia staff to present the project through various outreach efforts, including two statewide conferences, an international conference, local television and a web site (http://ksdl.ksbe.edu/heeia/index.html).

Besides providing training in cultural practices, the project teaches Western scientific methods for assessing water quality, such as monitoring dissolved oxygen, salinity, pH, nitrates, temperature, suspended solids, turbidity and chlorophyll. Collected data are maintained in journals along with environmental conditions such as tides, lunar cycles and other observations. Students also conduct monthly transects. The data are entered into computers and arranged in appropriate charts and graphs to facilitate analysis. Additional information is collected through *ka ike lonoa* (Hawaiian methods of sensorial knowledge), including *nana ka maka* (look with the eyes), *ka honi ana* (smell with the nose) and *paa ka waha* (shut your mouth–observe). Students are encouraged to form hypotheses, analyze information, test their findings and develop conclusions.

Paepae O Heeia is seeking additional funding to expand its efforts to include the entire Loko Ia O Heeia pond and to demonstrate methods at other *loko ia* (fishponds) throughout the state.

# Bottomfish Regime Proposed for CNMI

The Council in March recommended that the Secretary of Commerce implement the following regulations for the bottomfish fishery of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI):

- Prohibit commercial fishing vessels over 40 feet in length from targeting bottomfish species from 0 to 50 nautical miles from the southern boundary of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surrounding the CNMI to 16° 10′ 47″ N (i.e., half way between Farallon de Medinilla and Anatahan) and 10 nautical miles around Alamagan.
- Require federal permits and logbooks for all commercial vessels targeting bottomfish species within the EEZ waters surrounding CNMI.
- Require sales reporting of bottomfish sold in the CNMI from commercial vessels over 40 feet.
- Require vessel monitoring systems on all commercial bottomfish vessels over 40 feet in length.

The Council made similar recommendations for the Guam bottomfish fishery to National Marine Fisheries Service in 2002 for the Secretary of Commerce's approval.

# Hearings to Be Held on Overfishing and Fishery Data Collection

At its 126th Meeting in March 2005, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council recommended that options be developed for collecting data for all fisheries that harvest pelagic species (fish that swim in the open ocean, like tunas and marlin) and that these options be presented to the Council in June 2005 for its consideration. The need to improve data is in response to overfishing of bigeye tuna and main Hawaiian Islands bottomfish. Options for collecting the missing data may include refining the Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey (HMRFS) to capture data that is not collected; voluntary reporting through a variety of different methods, including logbooks, drop-boxes, phone surveys and the internet; or mandatory reporting through a federal permitting process.

Public hearings on the options will be held 6-9 p.m.
- May 13 at the Hawaii Naniloa Hotel, Hilo
- May 19 at the Council office, 1164 Bishop St., #1400, Honolulu

Knowing the total number of fishermen within a fishery and the amount of fish they catch are critical components to consider when developing fishery management measures. Without accurate data, managing a fishery is like trying to balance a checkbook without knowing the number of checks that have been written or the amount of money in the account.

For more information on the public hearings or the options being considered, contact the Council at (808) 522-8220 or info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov or visit the Council website at www.wpcouncil.org.

# Experts Lead Council's Ecosystem Science and Management Workshop

Ecosystem experts from around the world assisted the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council in identifying the scientific information needed to support ecosystem-based approaches to marine resource management in the Western Pacific Region. The Ecosystem Science and Management Planning Workshop, convened April 18-22 at the Council office in Honolulu, was attended by 60 participants representing federal and state agencies, national and international academic and science institutions, and non-government organizations.

The primary tasks of the workshop were to identify the most effective ecosystem-based approaches to marine resource management that can be implemented based on current data and to determine what new data or models will be required to advance ecosystem approaches in the long term. The panel of ecosystem scientists helped to identify key issues pertaining to data, models and ecosystem indicators and provided a series of recommendations on each of the key issues. The workshop report will be completed in July 2005.

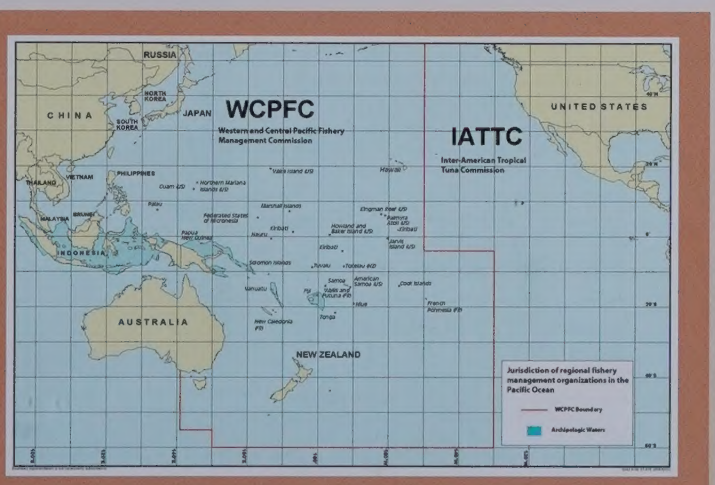
A workshop of social science experts is being planned that would mirror the natural sciences workshop just concluded. Focusing on the human ecology, it will address socioeconomic issues, including sustenance fishing and non-fishing uses.

The Ecosystem Science and Management Planning Workshop was hosted by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Kitty Simonds, executive director, front row center) and facilitated by the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (Sam Pooley, director, back row, 2nd from left). The Expert Panel included (front row, l-r) Villy Christensen, University of British Columbia; Neil Gribble, Queensland Department of Primary Industry; Steve Murawski, National Marine Fisheries Service; (back row, l-r) David Fluharty, University of Washington; Jerry Ault, University of Miami; Carl Walters, University of British Columbia; and Mike Fogarty, National Marine Fisheries Service.

# International Fishery Management in the Western Pacific Begins

The long awaited advent of an international fishery management regime for tuna fisheries in the Western and Central Pacific was realized in December 2004 at the first meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fishery Management Commission (WCPFC). The meeting was held in Pohnpei (Federated States of Micronesia), where the Secretariat of this new regional fishery management organization will be located.

The first meeting of the WCPFC marks the culmination of a decade of negotiations by various independent nations of the Pacific Islands and the metropolitan fishing nations of the Pacific Rim. The area of competence for the WCPFC essentially comprises the high seas waters between the Asian mainland and 150° W in the northern hemisphere and out to 130° W south of the equator. This dogleg was to accommodate French Polynesia, which has an exclusive economic zone that straddles the WCPFC area and the Eastern Tropical Pacific Ocean, where tuna stocks are managed by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC). This overlap means that the WCPFC and IATTC will have to cooperate to ensure that their respective management measures harmonize as far as possible to avoid conflicting management requirements between 130° and 150° W south of the equator.




Apart from organizational details, the WCPFC will have to deal with the issue of overfishing of Pacific bigeye tuna stocks. The North Pacific albacore stock is also under stress, likely as a result of environmentally induced depression of recruitment. Other stocks such as skipjack, yellowfin and South Pacific albacore are in good shape and are being fished below maximum sustainable yields.

Dealing with these management issues will be a serious challenge to the fledgling organization, considering that longline effort in the region has expanded continually since the 1950s, first by the growth of the fleets from Asia (Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Taiwan, China and Vietnam) and then from the Pacific Islands.

# Saipan Holds First Mahimahi Fishing Tournament

The first-ever Mahimahi Fishing Tournament in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, was held on April 14. Skipper Ignacio A. Guerrero (wearing white T-shirt and hat) and angler Rolando Banaga captured first place with their biggest mahi at 23 lbs, total catch of 12 fish and total weight of 186.5 lbs. Guerrero won a $3,500 cash prize for winning all three categories, $500 worth of fuel and lubrication from Shell Marianas and a 9.9 horsepower Yamaha outboard engine.

• National Fisheries Conference Addresses •

# Hot-Button Items

More than 600 of the nation's foremost fisheries experts gathered in Washington, DC, March 24-26, 2005, to address some of the most difficult challenges associated with marine resource conservation today. Policymakers, scientists, fishing industry members and environmentalists attending *Managing Our Nation's Fisheries II: Focus on the Future* conference explored a wide range of innovative solutions to outstanding issues, including

- Integrating ecosystem-based approaches into fisheries management,
- Strengthening the scientific advice on which management decisions are based, and
- Devising more effective mechanisms that promote sustainable fish harvesting.

Other hot-button topics were the subject of several workshops—the use of marine protected areas (MPAs) and protection of cold water corals, improving fisheries governance, addressing overfishing and stock rebuilding, and reconciling the conflicting federal statutes that often make fisheries management a lengthy and complicated process.

*Managing Our Nation's Fisheries II: Focus on the Future* was the second conference in a series designed to improve the management of marine fisheries in the United States. The first conference, held in November 2003, focused on regional fishery management programs, their successes and remaining challenges. The March 2005 conference focused explicitly on those challenges, all of which will be debated by Congress as it prepares to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the principal law that defines how US fisheries are managed.

Kitty Simonds, executive director of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, provided conference participants with an update on the Council's activities, including the "difficult and frustrating process" of developing draft fishing regulations for the proposed 132,000 square mile Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) National Marine Sanctuary (NMS).

"You can't have two agencies in charge of fisheries because it automatically imbues the process with conflict," Simonds noted. The highly regulated, limited entry bottomfish fishery could be shut down or its grounds significantly reduced if management of the fishery shifts to the NMS Program under NOAA's National Ocean Service instead of remaining under NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service and the Council process, where it has been since Congress passed the Fishery Conservation and Management Act in 1976.

"Throughout the [NWHI Sanctuary] designation process, the Council consistently made it clear that it fully intended to exercise the opportunity to prepare fishery regulations for the proposed sanctuary, as expressly provided by the National Marine Sanctuaries Act," noted Council Member and attorney Edwin Ebisui, speaking as a member of the Reconciling Statutes Panel. "In what could be reasonably perceived as a preemptive move, the Sanctuary Program came up with and aired its own preferred alternative for fishing regulations within the area of the proposed sanctuary. To my knowledge, the Sanctuary Program has no expertise, experience or statutory directive to come up with proposed fishing regulations…."

Following the workshop panel discussion, the full conference panel found that fishery management authority in National Marine Sanctuaries should be clarified within NOAA and federal law.

Findings from the conference and its workshops will be reviewed by the chairs and executive directors of the nation's eight Regional Fishery Management Councils when they meet April 26-28, 2005, in California.

For more information, visit the Managing Our Nation's Fisheries II conference website at www.managingfisheries.org.

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council booth at the Managing Our Nation's Fisheries II conference focused on archipelagic-based approaches to ecosystem management.

# Fishermen Speak Out on MPAs

More than 250 fishermen attended the Fishers Forum on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), held in Honolulu on March 15, 2005, as part of the 126th meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council. Council fisheries analyst Tony Beeching spoke on the Council's MPA policy and criteria for establishing and monitoring MPAs. Council environmental policy coordinator Eric Kingma addressed draft fishing regulations for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Hawaii State Rep. Ezra Kanoho explained the reasons for the Marine Reserve Network bills that were introduced during this year's legislative session. Guest speaker Randall Owens, senior project manager with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, summarized the implementation of MPAs in the Great Barrier Reef.

Following these short presentations, fishermen showed their concern about this topic in more than 60 written and numerous oral comments. The vast majority were outspoken against no-take areas to manage fisheries. Others expressed gratitude for the "good meeting" and "time well spent" and encouraged the Council to "continue having meetings" and "keep up the great work!!!"

Roy Morioka, chair of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, opens the Fishers Forum on marine protected areas.

# America's Oldest Industry Forms New Coalition

*Tens of thousands of US commercial fishermen generate well over $28 billion annually*

America's commercial family fishermen—a fiercely independent, hard-working, and determined group—are forming a national coalition to give them a unified voice in advocating national and state policy and to foster professional collaboration. The idea for the as-yet-unnamed coalition started several years ago at Fish Expo—an annual commercial fishing conference—and comes at a time when two national commissions have recommended sweeping reform to America's ocean policy.

On March 30-31, 2005, family fishermen from coastal communities in Hawaii, California, North Carolina, Maine, Massachusetts, Florida, Maryland, Louisiana, Washington and Alaska convened in New Orleans to discuss the issues affecting their communities. Fishermen addressed ways to improve water quality, provide health care, promote the image of wild seafood, strengthen community infrastructure and improve communication with legislators. After refining issues and developing ideas for national unity, the group members returned to their respective regions to get feedback from fellow fishing organizations. The group will reconvene later this spring to further their dialogue.

For more information, call Sara Randall at +1 415 561-3474.

# Global Decline of Tuna Populations Exaggerated

Recent claims that Pacific tunas are disastrously overfished are wrong. This is the conclusion reached in a new study by five distinguished international fisheries scientists published in *Nature* (434, E1-E2, 28 April 2005).

A 2003 *Nature* paper claimed that global stocks of tuna would soon disappear. The new study finds that the 2003 conclusions were based on flawed methods of analysis using only a small portion of the available data. The new study uses data that cover all the main habitats of tropical tuna and all the major countries that engage in large-scale fishing, including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and the United States. The earlier *Nature* paper used only a small portion of the data from Japan. The new study also uses data analysis methods that are widely recognized among fisheries scientists to provide the best estimates of changes in fish populations. Using better data and methods, the new study finds that some tropical tuna species are indeed threatened, but that many species are not. For example, southern albacore tunas (often sold as canned white meat tuna) remain highly abundant and are not at risk of disappearing in the next two to three decades, as was claimed in the earlier analysis.

The new findings are important because incorrect conclusions could lead to flawed fisheries management decisions. For further information on the abundance of tunas and errors in the 2003 article, go to http://imina.soest.hawaii.edu/PFRP/large_pelagics/large_pelagic_predators.html

# 89TH SSC, 127TH COUNCIL MEETING AND FISHERS FORUM TO FOCUS ON OVERFISHING

Overfishing of bigeye tuna in the Pacific and bottomfish in Hawaii will be the focus on the 89th Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and the 127th meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council. The SSC will meet May 17-19, 2005, at the Council office in Honolulu. The Council will meet May 31 to June 2, 2005, at the Ala Moana Hotel in Honolulu. The Fishers Forum, a part of the Council meeting, will be held 6-9 pm on June 1 at the Ala Moana Hotel and will focus on pelagic and nearshore tagging as well overfishing issues.

The Council took initial action on bigeye tuna overfishing at its March 2005 meeting. (See page 3.) The SSC and Council will review details of its proposed plan to address overfishing before taking a final action vote.

The Council learned at its March meeting that the National Marine Fisheries Service will be announcing overfishing of bottomfish in Hawaii. While the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands stocks remain healthy with a limited entry program allowing up to 17 vessels under 60 feet in length, the main Hawaiian Island populations are depleted and targeted by more than 3,000 bottomfish fishermen registered with the State of Hawaii. The Council will consider management options to address this issue when it convenes in June.

The SSC and Council are also expected to vote on the Council's Marine Protected Area guidelines and on black coral management options. The Council will consider changing the minimum size of the height and base diameter for black coral as well as removing the exemption for divers.

For more on the SSC and Council meeting, contact the Council at +1 808 522-8220 or info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov or visit the Council website at www.wpcouncil.org.

## Recipe Grilled Swordfish on a Bed of Orzo and Spinach Topped with Watercress Beurre Blanc

Courtesy of Nico's at Pier 38

### INGREDIENTS

2 swordfish steaks (7 oz ea.)
Rosemary
Thyme
Basil
Olive oil
Orzo
Spinach
1 cup onions, diced
½ cup shallots and garlic
1 lemon, whole, peeled
2 cups white wine
3 cups chicken stock
4 cups heavy cream
¼ lb butter
1 bunch watercress, fresh

### PREPARATION

Marinate swordfish in herbs and olive oil for 2 hours. Cook orzo, cool down and set aside. Blanch spinach and strain out water.

Sautee onions, shallots, garlic and lemon in pot. Deglaze with white wine. Reduce to half. Add chicken stock. Reduce to half and then add heavy cream. Reduce until thick. Strain sauce and blend in blender with butter and watercress.

Sautee spinach with garlic, butter and orzo. Grill swordfish 1½ minutes each side. Set orzo, spinach at center of the plate, fish on top and sauce over the fish. Decorate with fresh watercress.

## COUNCIL CALENDAR 2005

### MAY

**10-11** **Community Demonstration Project Program meeting**
Pacific Guardian Center, Honolulu

**11-12** **Council Marine Mammal Advisory Committee meeting**
Council office, Honolulu

**13** **Council Public Hearing on Overfishing and Data Collection**
Hilo, Hawaii

**16** **Coral Reef Ecosystem Plan Team meeting**
Council office, Honolulu

**17-19** **89th Scientific and Statistical Committee meeting**
Council office, Honolulu

**19** **Council Public Hearing on Overfishing and Data Collection**
Council office, Honolulu

**20-24** **Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup Conference**
Honolulu

**23** **Council Public Scoping on Shark Tour Operations and Community-Based Management,**
Alii Beach Park, Haleiwa, Hawaii

**23-25** **56th Tuna Conference**
Lake Arrowhead, California

**31** **127th Council Meeting and Advisory Panel meetings**
Ala Moana, Honolulu

### JUNE

**1** **Fishers Forum and Advisory Panel meetings**
Ala Moana Hotel, Honolulu

**1-2** **127th Council Meeting**
Ala Moana Hotel, Honolulu

**8** **NOAA Fish Fry**
Washington, DC

**10-12** **Honu Festival**
Turtle Bay Resort, Hawaii

**13-24** **Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) meeting**
Lanzarote, Canary Islands

### JULY

**11-16** **National Marine Educators Association conference**
Maui, Hawaii

**17-18** **One Ocean Marine Forum**
Maui, Hawaii

**25-29** **International Fishers Forum III,**
Yokohama, Japan

### AUGUST

**8-19** **2nd Meeting of Scientific Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fishery Commission and Working Groups**
Noumea, New Caledonia.

**30-31** **4th Annual Native Hawaiian Conference**
Sheraton Waikiki Hotel, Honolulu